

# The Midland

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## Concert Pictures

By H. H. BELLAMANN

### I—*Ondine*, (Ravel)

Behind a screen of stiff, gray leaves  
A cascade of topaz and emerald  
Falls with a sound  
Of polished round on round,  
As the widening fan of jewels  
Dips and slips in the opal pool.  
Trailing delicate willows  
Embroider faint lines  
On the undulant satin waters.  
In the shining gossamer  
Of languid, unbroken waves —  
Ivory and coral and virgin gold —  
A Lorelei ghost in sunset mirage.

**II — *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest*, (Debussy)**

Eager seas riding landward,  
Plum-blossom crest and blue opal,  
Unwaiting, wide armed to the sand.  
From the turbulent shore  
Ardent waves in the clover,  
Red-ridged with full flower,  
Break soft at the feet  
Of cloaked poplars  
That strain toward the town.

**III — *Le gibet*, (Ravel)**

Lines of cloud stream south.  
Copper tongues stretch from their hiding  
Under the hill,  
And a widening wind  
Hunts thru the empty sky.  
A puddle  
Leers with a single eye.

Squeal of a taut swung chain,  
Clink of tight chains —  
Four slow twisting chains —  
Holding black flutters  
Of freezing rags  
On the road past St. Denis.

*IV — Pavane pour une infante defunte, (Ravel)*

Wood-wind —  
Velvet-cool, deep forest shade —  
A sound more still than silence.  
Muted strings —  
Gold under violet, veil over veil —  
Pointing a rhythm of light  
On slow waves.

Bronze and purple sandals,  
Descending silver steps,  
Move upon the blue mosaic  
Like fond birds among the gentian  
And narcissus.

Wood-wind —  
Wide flow of green silence  
Over the flutter of blossoms.  
Muted strings —  
Winking candles thru lacquer screens  
Scrolled with pale flowers.

V — *Poissons d'or*, (Debussy)

Slip of orange,  
Thin red—  
Fire-bird in a forest enchanted.  
Ribbon dance  
In the dim lunar haze  
Of a still crystal maze.  
Like a gleam of cold eyes  
From a grotto—  
Pearls and corals that float  
Or that fall—  
A chill glitter of rain  
In the train of a spangled  
And red-ribboned flight.  
A gesture liquecent  
That speeds while it lures  
And melts while it flies  
As a jewel in wine  
Whose flamboyant shine  
Fades to undulant shade.

Fire-bird dance  
In the thin crystal haze  
Of a forest flame haunted  
And dim.

VI—*Reflets dans l'eau*, (Debussy)

Inverted birches sway like moss  
With the marcelled grasses  
In a globe of silver air.  
Spectral bones of sycamores  
Bend their joints  
In a dance macabre.  
A humming beetle twines the shade  
With a cord of gold,  
And the wraith-like rainbow fishes  
Hide among the folds  
Of the crinkled cloth of crystal  
Where closed lilies quiver,  
Breast round, breast white,  
In kissed ecstasies.

VII—*Clair de lune*, (Debussy)

Passion of silence among the trees,  
Shaken passion upon the lake,  
Ecstasy of mystery and pent breath  
Along the hedge —

Shimmer of unimagined white!

It is no ghost  
Of restless, dead, unsleeping light;  
It is the day's own self,  
Uncrowned of regal, weary splendors,  
Walking naked in the dark!

## **Requiescat in Pace**

By CLARK ASHTON SMITH

White iris on thy bier,  
With the white rose, we strew,  
And lotus pale or blue  
As moonlight on the orient mountain-snows.

Slumber as they that sleep  
In the slow sands unknown,  
Or under seas that zone  
With lulling foam the sealed, extremer lands.

Slumber, with songless birds  
That sang, and sang to death,  
Giving their gladder breath  
To lonely winds in one melodious pang.

Sleep, with the golden queens  
Of planets long forgot,  
Whose fire-soft lips are not  
Recalled by any sorcery of song.

Sleep, with the flow'rs that were,  
And any leaf that fell  
On field or flowerless dell,  
In autumn lost of memory and grief.

Pass, with the music flown  
From ivory lyre, and lute  
Of mellow string left mute  
In cities desolate ere the dream of Tyre.

Pass, with the clouds that sank  
In sunset turned to grey  
On some Edenic day  
For which the exiled years have ever yearned.

White iris on thy bier,  
With the white rose, we strew,  
And lotus pale or blue  
As moonlight on the orient mountain-snows.

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### Dissipation

By EMA S. HUNTING

A little fluttering of best, daintily-laundered handkerchiefs, a last nodding of white, grey or well-preserved heads, a diminishing chorus of regretful goodbyes — and the Friday Club settled back into corners of shining surreys and top buggies for the homeward drive.

It had been a pleasant day, wonderfully, rarely pleasant. The Friday Club had been genteelly hilarious to a degree and the pink of unrestrained laughter lingered on each old cheek in softening afterglow. Winchester was a country town to be sure, and yet the day in the real country as represented by the ample acres and spacious home of Mrs. Cross,

the one country member, was a treat. The dinner had been richly suggestive of unlimited quantities of cream and home made butter, the afternoon luncheon of more cream smothering luscious strawberries from the sunny side of the hill slope, the change, the long drive, the informality had combined to form a measure of dissipation rare indeed in the decorous annals of the Club.

In the first carriage of the procession, quite properly, the President sat, dressed as always in her grey silk, with a fetching compromise between a hat and a bonnet, done in lavender, topping the whitened waves of her hair. In point of appearance, the regularity of her attendance and the eminent elegance of her Club suppers, Mrs. Morton was a woman to grace the office of President of the Friday Club; but there were those, conspicuously Mrs. Brinton, the ex-President, who felt that a certain over-animation, a trace of youthful gaiety, in short, a lack of entire dignity sometimes observable in Mrs. Morton, were qualities which detracted from her entire fitness for the post. All of these disqualifications were more plainly visible than usual as the little procession made its way down the driveway to the main road, and turned its slow course eastward. The sun was just low enough behind the half-lowered hood of the buggy to throw a long cool shadow across the two women, and to sketch a fantastic caricature of the horse's ears on the soft dust of the road in front, but even in the gloom, Mrs. Morton's cheeks' were manifestly flushed and her eyes quite recklessly a-light. The very grasp of her

gloved hand on the "lines," dangerously loose considering that the timid beast they governed was a "livery horse" and so presumably capable of any act of equine mischief, suggested a state of mind quite unsuited to the dignity of office.

Her companion was an expansive woman whose son had achieved some distinction as a preacher, and who owed her membership to this fact and her own activity in making rugs and table mats, the proceeds of which were to buy a bust of some celebrity, to be chosen later, for the town library. She settled back as far into the corner of the seat as possible when the suspected horse struck his customary swinging walk, and heaved a sigh of thorough repletion.

"Mrs. Cross really did well," she remarked. "I must think to ask for that strawberry jell receipt. I never could get strawberries to jell. It was real nice, wa'n't it?"

Mrs. Morton gave a reckless flip to the left rein.

"This horse is so slow, I wish — I wish we could gallop." Mrs. Parsons gasped. Then, because it was easier, she laughed a plump chuckle.

"Well, I ain't so anxious to get back home for my part. It's real nice driving at this time of day, ain't it?" Mr. Parsons was Justice of the Peace and a gentleman of the old school and Mrs. Parsons had long been unaccustomed to the luxury of driving along with most other luxuries. Mrs. Morton looked lingeringly at the deepening beauty of the afternoon, sweetened by pink wild roses along the fences and fretted with drifting cloud shadows. It was not be-

cause she wanted to hurry home that the unworthy desire for swift motion possessed her. Oh, far from that! She never wanted to leave this magic of golden afternoon, and rolling fields, and drifting clouds. She leaned forward and took the stiff, shining whip out of its socket.

"I'm not afraid to -- to whip — it," she declared, remembering with delicious thrills her husband's repeated injunctions to drive carefully. "Are you afraid?" she challenged. The plump gurgle again shook Mrs. Parsons's amplitude. There was an element of infection in the President's reckless mood.

"I guess you can manage it. Are you used to horses? It would be real nice, wouldn't it?"

The President straightened herself with the light of determination in her eyes and the cleft of desperate purpose between her brows. She took both reins jauntily in one hand and raised the whip with the other. She was quite breathless.

"You are sure you aren't afraid? It is a livery horse," she added, resolved to be strictly honorable even at a risk. But Mrs. Parsons had come from Kentucky long ago in her girlhood, and blood is thicker than water. She nodded silently. Again the whip was raised and this time descended with dainty, persuasive emphasis on the flank of the livery horse. The horse stopped in the midst of a deliberate step forward and turned a surprised, inquiring face back at the reckless occupants of the buggy.

"Well now!" gasped Mrs. Parsons on the edge of another gurgle. "I guess we needn't have been scared." But Mrs. Morton was made of sterner

stuff. It was a dreadful thing to do while the poor beast was looking straight into her face, but strike him she did. This time the horse nodded his head sagely as one who at last comprehends what is expected of him, and once more turning his nose toward the open road in front carefully gathered himself together and broke into a gentle jog trot.

"Well now," gurgled Mrs. Parsons, "this is real nice."

It was not a particularly exhilarating pace but it took considerable insistence to preserve it and in her absorption in this novel work, the President drove, all unknowing, past the cross road that she should have taken for Winchester, and the remainder of the little procession, drugged with the spring and the merrymaking and the beauty, followed unsuspecting.

Such a drive through such a world! The gentle up and down curves of the dust-padded road, the fragrant green of its sides, the fences with their clustering wealth of bloom, and beyond the fields with their mystery of growing life. The river was glimpsed sometimes through openings in the hills and farm houses were passed with children and chickens around the door, and big dogs that ran out to bark. In the orchards a few trees still kept a dusting of white blossoms and their perfume was intensely sweet. The little procession became more and more gay. A trail of laughter followed its course. Jokes were told and exulted over, funny experiences recounted, old, dear, long-unsung songs were sung in tremulous, carefree voices. Gossip

was forgotten, recipes were never mentioned, diseases and misfortunes as topics of conversation were banished from their minds. The dignity of the Club, hitherto preserved at the price of much self-repression and remembrance of precedent, became merged into a fluttering merry-making. Farther and farther the fantastic caricatures of the horses' ears were stretched out in front, and cooler and more fragrant became the shadows of the buggy tops. It was Mrs. Brinton, in the second buggy, who noticed first the unusual length of the drive. "Shouldn't we be getting to that hill where we can see the Court House tower?" she queried. "We've been going a long time."

"Why, that's so." The sprightly little Mrs. Patton stood up to look farther down the road. No Court House steeple—and indeed no hill, for the road sloped gently down the incline of a tender little hollow through which a prairie brook meandered in gurgling ease. Mrs. Patton looked behind them and gave a gasp.

"See," she cried, pointing to the great disk of the sun just touching the horizon. "The sun is going down. Where can we be?" Her action caught the attention of the women in the buggies behind, and they too looked at the tell-tale sun. Consternation fell on the company. Visions of supperless husbands and sons and daughters rose before the minds of the merry-makers. Visions too of being lost and wandering around unprotected through the darkness seized on the imaginations of the more timid. All stopped with one accord, and Mrs. Brinton called

loudly to the President who turned her steed with infinite precaution and came back to find out the trouble.

"You must have led us the wrong way," said Mrs. Brinton with a trace of triumph in her voice. "The sun is almost down and we should have been at home by this time."

"And we are still going east and we should be going south," put in a plump woman from the third carriage.

"Do you suppose we are lost?" quavered the Secretary. The President faced them resolutely. Then — she giggled. Mrs. Brinton decided afterwards that there was no other word to describe it.

"Isn't this fun? Isn't it? Think if we had gone straight home like proper people how tame things would have been. Where do you suppose we are?"

A little ripple of excitement ran through the company. The mood of the President certainly was infectious. Besides they were all in nearly the same mood and the drive had been so delicious.

"Do you suppose we are lost?" repeated the Secretary but this time in a tone almost of longing. Laughter and chat broke out again and disturbing visions fled away. It was almost a lark.

"We missed the turn, I suppose, close by Mrs. Cross's. We better go right back the way we have come until we get to that corner again." It was a work of time and difficulty to get turned around and started again with their faces toward the sunset, but in time it was accomplished and the homeward journey once more begun.

"I'm glad I ate a second helping of them strawberries," confided Mrs. Parsons happily. "I ain't a mite hungry and the drive home will be real nice."

Happy for the light-hearted Friday Club that it could not see the effect of its absence on the husbands and children left at home! Five o'clock, six, seven, eight, nine o'clock and still no Club! While there was daylight there was comparative ease of mind, but with the darkness, though lightened by an early moon, anxiety began. Mr. Patton called Mr. Brinton up over the telephone and they consulted in wondering alarm. Mrs. Parsons's married daughter who had slipped over to Mother's for a visit, ran home to tell her husband in great distress. Mr. Brown met Mr. Morton pacing the walk in mingled wrath and fright. "I knew it," he kept saying. "I knew it and I told her when she went off with that livery horse. I told her she couldn't manage it. I knew it all the time."

"Do you think they have had a runaway maybe? Martha has driven our old nag time and again — "

"Oh, a runaway like as not! What can you expect of these women's clubs? I have always opposed them from the start and I'm not surprised, sir, not surprised in the least. Don't let it worry you, it's no more than you can expect. I don't wonder at it. I am not worked up about it in the least." He mopped his brow and took another turn to the corner and back. "If it were not perfectly useless to take another horse and start out to look for them one could do that, but no man can tell where, or by what road a lot of women would consider it possible to get back to town. My wife has no more idea of

directions than the babe unborn, sir, not a bit. And I doubt if there is a woman in the entire Club who has. They left town going due north but I should not be surprised if they were at this minute heading west without knowing the difference. The only thing to do without any question is to simply sit down quietly and wait," which he proceeded to do by taking his turn to the corner and back in a state of feverish excitement.

Gradually all the other husbands drifted to the Morton porch as a possible center of enlightenment. He greeted them all in exactly the same way, denouncing woman's clubs, maintaining that the present state of affairs was the only and logical result of tolerating them, and repeating again and again that he had foreseen it all the time.

At twenty minutes of ten, the little procession headed again by the pink-cheeked President, turned the corner nearest the Morton home. The horses had relapsed into a leisurely walk eminently suited to their age and respectability and the reins were held loosely in the unaccustomed hands. Mr. Morton saw them first and started to blow his nose violently, but stopped midway arrested by an unexpected sound. The men on the porch rose, and stood in silence listening. The Friday Club was singing. The voices were not strong and trembled a little over the long remembered words, and they sang very slowly and lingeringly. But there was a quiver of softened happiness in the heart of the music that came painfully sweet through the moonlit night to the group of listeners on the porch. It was like an echo from a far away country, a message from a

time long ago lived through, like a fragrance of old roses and summer fields.

After all, the Friday Club was not scolded for its delinquency. The pink-cheeked President wondered somewhat at the silence of her lord when he relieved her of the management of the livery horse, and even more at the vehemence with which he blew his nose when he returned and found her sitting happily on the porch.

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### Sketch

By WILLIAM JOHNSTON

It was yesterday it happened,  
When the daylight was near its death.  
First there came wind—  
A sky full of blustering wind,  
Unsteadily blowing a misshapen moon along  
Through blurs and blots of cloud  
Over the marsh.

Memory came;  
(Strange, strange is memory!)  
This was the same marsh road  
We walked together once,  
Lover and lover.

Then, voices, voices!  
Two voices; yours was one,  
Sleeper, O sleeper:  
One crying, "Stay, O stay!"  
One whispering, "Come away";  
And I come; Wait, I pray,  
Sleeper, O sleeper.

